

MEMORANDUM

TO: Superintendents, Charter School Administrators, and Administrators of State-Accredited Nonpublic Schools
FROM: Indiana Department of Education
DATE: July 25, 2017
RE: Diplomas and Certificates

This memorandum addresses the following issues¹:

- The requirements a student attending an Indiana public school or state-accredited nonpublic school must achieve in order to graduate and receive a high school diploma; and
- The issuance of Certificates of Completion, Certificates of Achievement, and other Certificates at the local level.

Graduation Requirements

Pursuant to [Ind. Code § 20-32-4-1](#), a student must meet the academic standards tested in the graduation examination; the Core 40 course and credit requirements adopted by the state board under [Ind. Code § 20-30-10](#); and any local graduation requirements to be eligible to graduate and receive a diploma. The minimum graduation requirements, including the Core 40 course and credit graduation requirements, may be found at 511 IAC 6-7.1 (for students who entered high school during or subsequent to the 2006-2007 school year). A student that meets these requirements is eligible to graduate and receive a high school diploma. 511 IAC 6-7.1-1(e) defines a “high school diploma” as a certificate of graduation that certifies the student has satisfied the minimum requirements for graduation from a high school. Currently, students have the option of earning one of four diploma types: General; Core 40; Core 40 with Academic Honors; or Core 40 with Technical Honors. For further information on each type of high school diploma and graduation requirements, please refer to the Department’s website at: <http://www.doe.in.gov/achievement/curriculum/indianas-diploma-requirements>.

Please note that [Indiana Code § 20-32-4-4](#) provides alternate means for a student that does not pass the graduation examination to satisfy this requirement and receive a high school diploma. Additionally, a

¹ Please note that previous versions of this memorandum are obsolete.

student that does not meet the Core 40 course and credit requirements may still be eligible to graduate with a “general diploma” if the student goes through the formal opt out process outlined in [Ind. Code § 20-32-4-7](#). Indiana Code § 20-26-5-37(b) provides that a student with a disability may not be required to complete locally required credits that exceed state credit requirements to receive a diploma unless required as part of the student’s individualized education program (IEP).

Certificates

Public and state-accredited nonpublic schools have the ability to award a document to a student who completes the minimum courses required for high school graduation, but does not meet the academic standards tested in the graduation examination or the requirements of [Ind. Code § 20-32-4-4](#). While there is no prohibition against a school awarding such a document, this document does not certify that the student has earned a diploma from high school. Therefore, a student who is awarded such a document is not considered to have graduated from high school, and may continue to pursue a diploma. Please note that participation in graduation exercises is a matter for local decision, with the exception of the provisions of 511 IAC 7-42-10 regarding special education students, and [Ind. Code § 20-33-5-11](#) regarding failure of parent to pay fees.

The naming of such certificates may be determined locally. When titling or naming such a certificate, schools should be aware of some terms that exist in statute that, if used, could cause confusion for recipients. Additionally, schools should note that the term “diploma” can only be used to reference a document that certifies the completion of high school graduation requirements. Below is a list of terms for clarification.

- **Diploma:** A diploma, or a document that includes the word “diploma”, may be awarded only to a student who meets all of the graduation requirements outlined in [Ind. Code § 20-32-4-1\(b\)](#), or meets alternate means for satisfying the graduation requirements outlined in [Indiana Code § 20-32-4-4](#) and [Ind. Code § 20-32-4-7](#).
- **Certificate of Achievement:** [Indiana Code § 20-32-3](#) permits a student to pursue an academic or technical certificate of achievement. A certificate of achievement may be awarded based on satisfactory demonstration of proficiency on an Advanced Placement Test for an academic certificate of achievement, or an assessment approved by the Department of Workforce Development for a technical certificate of achievement. The term “Certificate of Achievement” may only be used to refer to a document awarded for completion of the program outlined in [Ind. Code § 20-32-3](#), and may not be used in any other circumstances. The attainment of a certificate of achievement is not a requirement for high school graduation unless the local school board requires it to be so.

- **Certificate of Completion:** [Ind. Code § 20-35-4-11](#), which deals with special education programs and services, permits a school corporation to issue “diplomas or certificates of graduation” to students with disabilities completing special educational programs approved by the state superintendent and the state board. Please note that this language is a grant of authority to a school corporation, and not a designation of a title for a document. This is because a diploma may not be issued to a student with a disability that is different from a diploma provided to a student without a disability; and because a student is not eligible to graduate from high school unless the student meets the requirements of [Ind. Code § 20-32-4](#). New guidelines are currently being developed for the Certificate of Completion for students with disabilities. Although less rigorous than a high school diploma, the certificate of completion would require students to complete some combination of credits and applied units equaling a total of 40, with an emphasis on academics and job readiness.

Additionally, 511 IAC 7-43-4(h) requires that the IEP of a student entering grade 9 or becoming 14 years of age must contain documentation regarding whether the student will pursue a high school diploma, as defined in 511 IAC 6-7.1-1(e), or a certificate of completion. Although the term “certificate of completion” is not defined, it is interpreted to be a document awarded to a special education student who is not capable of earning a diploma but completes the public school educational program prescribed in the student’s IEP. The term “Certificate of Completion” may only be used to refer to a document awarded for completion of the special educational program outlined in a student’s IEP, and may not be used in any other circumstances.

- **Other Certificates:** Use of a certificate with another name, e.g., Certificate of Accomplishment, Certificate of Attendance, or Certificate of Course Completion, may be determined locally. These terms are not mentioned in statute or rule, but schools should be cautious when using such terms so that no confusion with a diploma or one of the statutorily recognized certificates occurs.